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American Polka in the Media: From Next to Nothing to 24/7

Richard March

1 For the past 175 years polka music and dance has had a presence in the culture of the United States. Its relative prominence or obscurity have varied over the decades; there have been periods when polka had a high profile in American popular culture and times when it has retreated to in-group ethnic and regional communities which have tenaciously preserved the music and dance as a valued component of their heritage.

2 There are numerous other music traditions of American ethnic groups with varying degrees of currency in the mainstream music industry (Lornell; March, 2007; March, 2013 111-136). Through its history, the cluster of music traditions known as polka has experienced cycles of being embraced, then ignored and denigrated, then embraced again in varying contexts.

3 Polka has a unique history that confounds rigid notions of clear divisions between folk, popular, and elite culture. It originated as a pop culture fashion in nineteenth-century Europe, a fashion however, which was touted in the communications media of the time as stemming from supposed peasant, folk sources, and the polka fad was rapidly embraced by all segments of society. From their very inception, the media presence of polka music and dance has been crucial to their diffusion (Blau and March 27-30).

4 Beginning in Central Europe in the 1840s, to appeal to then-fashionable Romantic Nationalist ideas, a legend concerning the polka's origins was propagated which asserted that a particular peasant servant girl, usually a Czech, but sometimes a Pole, "invented" the dance. Her learned employer, usually a German or Austrian, "wrote it down" and the polka craze spread like wildfire. Aided of late by the internet echo-chamber, the legend is stronger than ever; details have been added, in one version, even pegging polka's inception to two o'clock on a particular Sunday afternoon in the 1830s (Keil *et al.* 10-14).

5 There is no reliable evidence for the polka origin legend, of course, and it is difficult to find any specific peasant dance step that is a clear antecedent of the polka. Its sudden emergence as an urban popular culture craze in the 1840s suggests that the dance

actually was a faster, vigorous intensification of the waltz, the popular couples' dance that had outraged conservative conventions a few decades earlier much as the polka did again at the time of its emergence (Keil *et al.* 13).

6 The mass media played a prominent role both in polka's spread and acceptance as well as providing a platform for its condemnation by detractors. Illustrated magazines and newspapers published in England were especially influential in conveying news of Europe's mushrooming polka vogue to the United States in 1844. Only a few months after its advent in London, the polka became an attraction at beer gardens in New York. [1] As all pop culture fads do, the polka rage faded in mainstream US popular culture by the 1880s, but by that time the dance and its music had become associated with the ethnic cultures of several of the burgeoning Central, Northern, and Eastern European immigrant groups in the USA. Even as the polka craze ebbed in many European countries, among the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century emigrants, polka's association with an idealized notion of the culture of their homelands at the time of their departure prompted the ethnic communities to enshrine polka as a symbol of their heritage and a participatory activity intrinsic to ethnic community gatherings (March, 2002 61).

7 When phonograph records emerged early in the twentieth century as a key mass medium for music, large companies such as Victor and Columbia recorded diverse ethnic musical genres in order to market their discs to the diverse American population. Radio soon followed as another musical medium, including broadcasts that featured recordings or live performances by ethnic bands. Thus through the first decades of the twentieth century polka was entrenched in ethnic recordings and on radio, but generally these artists scarcely attracted audiences beyond the so-called hyphenated Americans: German-, Polish-, or Czech-Americans, for example (Gronow; Greene).

8 Playing for the immense German-American population, "Whoopee John" Wilfahrt was the sole American polka musician to achieve national "star" status before World War Two. His wide fame relied in part upon self-parody; on stage he portrayed a comic figure, sporting a Bavarian jaeger's hat and lederhosen, a costume that had little to do with his family's ancestral homeland in Bohemia, but everything to do with the prevalent American stereotype of a "Jolly Dutchman" (Lornell).

9 At the end of World War Two there were significant changes in American society. Seemingly contradictory developments affected the social perception of polka in the USA. There was a substantial lessening of discrimination against white Eastern and Southern European ethnics, many the American-born children of immigrant parents. A wider definition of "whiteness" emerged that now included groups like Polish- and Italian-Americans. Their acceptance into the mainstream was posited, however, on their embrace of mainstream American culture, shedding most of their parents' Old Country ways. At the same time, they brought a few elements from their cultures into the mainstream: Italian pizza became a common American food and polka, in an Americanized yet still recognizably ethnic form, became a new post-War dance craze. Generally, entertainment media in this period de-emphasized producing and marketing products for the wide array of ethnic cultures. Columbia and Victor dropped nearly all of their ethnic recording artists. But the exception proved to be the Americanized versions of polka that emerged in the later 1940s (Roediger).

10 Frankie Yankovic, a Slovenian-American from Cleveland became the era's iconic polka musician. He updated the polka music he had learned from immigrant boarders in his boyhood home. Yankovic switched from the old fashioned button accordion to a modern instrument, the piano keyboard accordion, and he incorporated a host of American traits into his musical style: a jazz-influenced rhythm section of tenor banjo and "walking" string bass, a new modern melody voice, the Solovox, an early electronic organ, and perhaps most important, English-language song lyrics that made his hit tunes "American" and instantly recognizable. He did not, however, anglicize his surname, a nearly universal practice for entertainers in that era. Recording for a major label, Columbia Records, his polka rendition of "Just Because," a Country song, became a huge national hit in 1947. Yankovic suddenly was prominent in the mass media of that era: records, radio airwaves, and his band even journeyed to Hollywood where he was featured in "soundie" short films to be shown in movie theaters prior to the featured film (Dolgan).

11 In the decade from 1945 to 1955 polka rivaled the popularity of jazz. In the 1995 documentary film *Frankie Yankovic: America's Polka King*, Yankovic's second accordionist, Tops Cardone related an anecdote about a "battle of the bands" gig they played alongside the legendary Duke Ellington Orchestra. Seeing that Yankovic's band was eliciting a bigger response from the crowd, the good-natured Ellington reportedly said, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," and led his band in a rendition of "Clarinet Polka." In 1947 Arthur Godfrey, a preeminent media personality of the post-War period had a hit song with the "Too Fat Polka," and in 1951, bandleader Lawrence Welk, a North Dakota transplant to southern California, began his long television career hosting a musical variety show which typically included a polka or two on each program (Candee; Welk).

12 Even though polka's position in American pop music began a nosedive in 1955 with the rise of Elvis Presley and the Rock 'n Roll craze, polka maintained a small but significant media presence from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the Upper Midwestern states' rural areas while farmers were eating their mid-day meal, local radio stations often featured polkas during the noon hour, just before or after announcements of the latest farm commodity prices. Industrial cities that were home to numerous polka-loving ethnic communities typically had polka shows on local radio. Local performers, including polka musicians appeared frequently on television to comply with the stations' public service guidelines then required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ("Public Interest Standard").

13 The erosion of polka's presence in the US media accelerated in the 1980s. The demographic group that had embraced polka in the 1940s was aging. Polka's low-brow rural, ethnic and working-class associations were mocked as old-fashioned and geeky. Although there had long been an appreciation of Country music in the North, during the 1970s, Nashville's Country Music industry began to assertively market Country artists beyond their Southern bastion, increasingly winning the full devotion of Northern white working-class and rural audiences, frequently the children of polka enthusiasts. After the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 there ensued a consolidation of the ownership of broadcast media stations. For example, one large-scale owner, Clear Channel Communications, purchased over 1,200 stations in the USA, and introduced standardized program formats that made no place for polka shows. By the later 1990s polka enthusiasts in most of the United States complained that they

could never, or scarcely ever hear their favorite form of music via radio or television (Boehlert).

14 At the same time, in the later 1990s, use of the Internet expanded rapidly. As bit rate and broadband width expanded, Internet offerings increasingly moved from text and still photos to audio and video material of ever improving quality. In the mid-1990s internet radio webcasting emerged. Despite ongoing complications concerning copyright, licensing, and royalties issues that even resulted in a months-long interruption of service in 2002, internet radio now serves a growing audience of millions of listeners to webcasts produced by conventional radio stations and from internet-only services (Hoeg and Lauterbach).

15 The initiator of polka webcasting is Ray Zalokar, a Slovenian-American musician and radio disc jockey from the Cleveland area. In a 2014 interview, Zalokar stated:

> Back in the late 90's The Casuals [Zalokar's band] were traveling the country performing our style of polka music. No matter where we traveled, people were complaining about all the polka shows that were being removed from local radio stations and weren't being replaced by new polka shows. Polka music was being forced off of local radio. I had a daily Polka show on WELW and started to realize that the internet might be the answer....[2]

16 In October of 2000, he began streaming 24/7 Polka Heaven from the studios of WELW in Cleveland. It was an experiment. The bulk of the polka audience is an elderly population not known for extensive computer usage. Nevertheless, Zalokar's expectations were exceeded. There was an audience that quickly discovered the webcast:

> Almost immediately we started receiving emails from people all over the country that had found 24/7 Polka Heaven on their computers. We were hoping for 10,000 hits the first year and we actually hit 10,000 by mid-December—after only 2 ½ months. It was obvious there was a need and people were eager to hear polka music on their computers.[3]

17 Initially the service had only five or six polka shows and the webcast was monaural. But the number of polka DJs who were interested in becoming IJs (Internet Jockeys) grew rapidly; there now are 46 shows produced by more than forty IJs. In order to fill the needed 168 hours, each hour-long show is repeated three to four times in a week. And while a monaural webcast still is available to listeners who use a slower dial-up internet service, most listeners now have cable or DSL internet connections and receive the webcast in stereo with sound quality that approaches CDs. During the year 2013, 24/7 Polka Heaven had more than four million sessions logging-on.

18 24/7 Polka Heaven has made sure to schedule programming that features a wide variety of polka styles. Polish-style polkas are webcast 60 hours per week, Slovenian-style 37 hours, IJs who include a variety of styles in their shows are scheduled 44 hours per week. There is a show featuring Big Band dance music. Of the predominant types of American polka, the so-called "Oom Pah" music, Dutchman and Czech/Bohemian polka, is less represented. Some of the "variety" IJs include tunes in this style on their play lists, but there is only one IJ on the 24/7 schedule, Wisconsin's Gary Kuchenbecker, whose program is entirely devoted to Oom Pah. Compared to the Slovenian and especially the Polish style, the Oom Pah audience likely tends to be more elderly and rural with a lower proportion of computer users.[4]

19 Nonetheless, Oom Pah has a web radio niche. There is one small internet-only station, WRJQ in Appleton, Wisconsin, that offers Oom Pah around the clock. Originally a

terrestrial AM station, WRJQ was purchased by a conglomerate in 2002 which changed its call letters and dumped its polka format in favor of sports talk. Aaron Schuelke, a young man from Appleton who works in commercial radio, got his start in radio on WRJQ in 1994 at the age of 13. He fell in love with the music that he programmed, old-time polka of the Upper Midwest. In January, 2006 he launched an internet station webcasting Oom Pah, much of it by local area bands, from a home studio. Schuelke indicates that Goodtime Radio WRJQ has 800 to 1,000 listeners log on daily. Though it is available world-wide, WRJQ retains the character of a small local station. The costs of the operation, only a few hundred dollars per month, are covered mostly by donations from listeners, most of them from nearby towns in northeastern Wisconsin.

20 A good idea is bound to attract competitors. A few years after 24/7 Polka Heaven's takeoff, Jack Baciewski, a Connecticut polka promoter, launched Polka Jammer, another polka webcast network, devoted almost exclusively to Polish-American polka styles. Baciewski recruited some polka DJs who had lost access to the airwaves when the stations they broadcast on were sold. He also included in his webcast lineup Bill Belina's Saturday morning polka program broadcast over WMUA, the public station based at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

21 An early Baciewski recruit was Jim "Chainsaw" Kucharski from Chicago, a well-versed young polka musician who had been a member of several of Chicago's best bands since the later 1980s. Kucharski began his web radio efforts on 24/7 Polka Heaven at its inception in 2000. The prospect of doing a second show in a two-hour time slot lured him to Polka Jammer in 2003. For a couple of years Kucharski ran shows on both polka web networks, but eventually opted to concentrate on Polka Jammer where he had a more flexible format.

22 In 2008, Jack Baciewski retired from Polka Jammer due to health issues and Kucharski took over as president of the network. In a Frequently Asked Questions column on his show's website, Polka Madhouse, Kucharski explains the financial factors that have compelled many polka DJs to become IJs.

> The charge of most AM radio stations in the Chicagoland area that do broker airtime is overly cost-prohibitive. The average cost for a polka show on AM radio is around $200 a show, and you have to pay a 13-week minimum in advance, plus a deposit. ($200 x 13 weeks + $600 deposit = $3,200). That has to be paid upfront before you even tape your first show! In addition, most new shows have to stay on the air for at least one year before advertisers will consider sponsoring your show. In my case, it's a Catch-22: you can't stay on the air if you don't have sponsors, but you can't get sponsors unless you've been on the air for a year.

The fees charged to IJs by the web networks are much lower.

23 As its popularity declined in recent decades, preserving the polka has come to be thought of as a *cause celebre* by its devotees. Following the example of public radio stations, the polka web networks solicit and receive financial donations from listeners to augment the advertising revenue that the stations are able to generate. Polka Jammer's 2014 "Jammer-thon" exceeded its $25,000 fundraising goal, reaching $28,000 in pledged contributions. In 2010 Kucharski began to reorganize Polka Jammer Network as a charitable non-profit organization, a process that was completed in 2013. Kucharski stepped down as head of the network in May 2013, turning over the presidency to Todd Zaganiacz, a DJ who shares radio programming duties at public radio WMUA with Bill Belina.

24 Polka's presence on television also decreased markedly in the 1980s. After the FCC ceased calling for local content as a public service requirement on TV stations local polka shows were cut, often replaced by syndicated Country Music shows produced in Nashville. Lawrence Welk's show had been cut by the ABC network in 1971 but continued as a syndicated show until 1982 when the production of new programs finally ceased. The show regained some media exposure on public television a few years later. In 1986 Oklahoma Public Television acquired the rights to the show and offered reruns of old Welk programs to American public television stations. It currently runs on 279 stations. To appeal to older viewers, the public stations have frequently made special broadcasts of the Welk reruns as fundraising programs during their pledge drives.

25 A couple of public TV stations have produced their own original polka programs for the same purpose: "Polka from Cuca," "Polka 2000" and "Polka!" by Wisconsin Public Television and "Polka Passion" by Nebraska Educational Television have been very successful fundraising shows. Pioneer Public Television, a small network of stations in rural western Minnesota has produced more than 900 "Funtime Polka" programs since 1996. Recent broadcasts can be viewed on the network's website. Also a few documentary film makers have become fascinated by the polka phenomenon and their works have aired on public television. Rees Candee's *Frankie Yankovic: America's Polka King* is a bio doc of Frankie Yankovic, Lisa Blackstone's *Polka Time* focused upon the polka festival in Gibbon, Minnesota, and Craig DiBiase's *It's Happiness: A Polka Documentary* emphasized the Wisconsin polka scene.

26 A new opportunity for regular national broadcasts of a polka television program emerged with the proliferation of digital cable and satellite channels. In December, 2000, RFD-TV was launched, a station which features programming concerning rural interests. The channel's name refers to Rural Free Delivery, the United States Postal Service system for delivering mail to rural residents. The station's production and uplink facilities are located in Nashville, Tennessee, while their corporate and national sales offices are based in Omaha, Nebraska. It is carried by satellite TV services, as well as through several cable TV providers. By 2013, RFD-TV was available to 40 million households, more than one third of households with television in the United States.

27 One of the very first programs to be aired on RFD-TV was "The Big Joe Polka Show," a popular polka program hosted by Omaha resident Joseph "Big Joe" Siedlik. These polka shows utilize a simple straightforward format. They basically set up a couple of TV cameras in a ballroom, point them for the most part at the band, capture the dancers as they pass in front of the stage and occasionally zoom in on a musician. Due to contract disputes between Siedlik and the station, the show ended in 2011, but was soon replaced by the Mollie B. Polka Party, hosted by a young Minnesota-native polka musician Mollie Busta. The one-hour program features the nation's top polka bands performing in a wide variety of ethnic styles. The Mollie B. shows are filmed on location at polka festivals around the country.

28 Siedlik, in possession of more than 150 recorded shows, looked for another medium to market them after his parting of ways with RFD-TV. In September, 2013 he introduced the "Big Joe Family Shows," a 24-hour polka channel available through Roku, a new type of streaming device for TV that made his shows available for a subscription fee. This effort ended with Siedlik's death in 2015 so it remains to be seen if Roku might attract a significant polka audience ("'Big Joe' Siedlik").

29 There are also a growing number of polka videos on YouTube, the video sharing website. Virtually all of the hundreds of videos on YouTube featuring American polka bands were recorded by audience members at live performances using hand-held cameras. Often the sound and picture quality is weak. The view of the musicians frequently is blocked by circling dancers. Videos produced even by the International Polka Association at their annual festival and posted on their YouTube channel are of the same ilk. Official music videos of the sort produced by or for bands performing in other music genres and posted on YouTube as a promotion of the group are very rare in the polka field. At present, only the Chardon Polka Band, a "neo-polka" group of youthful musicians from the Cleveland area who seem to have had no prior experience performing in any of the traditional polka idioms, have produced official, carefully edited videos. Their videos have received substantially more views than traditional polka bands—their "Two Sisters Polka" had nearly 300,000 views in less than two years. It is unknown however how many of those viewers are polka devotees. While polka fans' usage of YouTube seems to be increasing, the most viewed videos of traditional polka bands, even of the most famous bands like Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones—for example their "Hey Pretty Girl"—or Li'l Wally have been viewed only in the tens of thousands of times over a five to seven year time period.

30 YouTube has also proven to be a medium for exposing American polka fans to European ensembles. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of videos of polka bands and Volksmusik ensembles from Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia. Many of the videos have excellent production values, either produced as official videos of the bands or taken from professionally-produced television programs. Many of these videos have been viewed hundreds of thousands and some more than a million times. While it is likely that most of the viewers are from Europe, the feature of YouTube that suggests related videos often brings them to the attention of American viewers when an American polka band's video is selected—e.g. a 2009 recorded performance of Die Twinnies, dubbed "Bayernmädels" and presented as "2 Girls playing steirische harmonika on rollerskates!"

31 There is evidence that American polka fans are discovering European bands through these videos. For example, the May 2013 Squeezebox Jamboree in McFarland, Wisconsin, an annual gathering of accordion and concertina players, was held in a sports bar with numerous video monitors on every wall. Duane Steinhauer, one of the event's organizers, created a play list of YouTube videos to show on these screens during set-up time and breaks in the jamboree program. Many of the videos featured polka bands like Navihanke from Slovenia, Die Twinnies from Germany and Jodlervagabunden from Austria. The all-female Slovenian polka band Navihanke has achieved enough of a following in America that they made a two-week, nine-cities performing tour of the United States in April and May, 2014.

32 The availability of polka music in American mass media has taken a roller coaster ride during the last seventy years. In the later 1940s, when large corporate interests had firm control over the content of mass media programming, the new Americanized styles of polka were improbably selected to be a widely promoted form of commercial music—even at the very time that most ethnic-related entertainment was being abandoned by large commercial interests. When polka was eclipsed by the arrival of the next trend, the Rock 'n Roll craze, the polka music and dance genre retained a loyal following who gathered in the context of ethnic groups or tight communities of polka

enthusiasts. As this fan base aged and diminished, the consolidating corporate media squeezed polka out until polka's media presence reached a nadir in the 1990s.

33 At the same time, interactive digital communications and diverse cable and satellite media proliferated which allowed for people with a wide array of non-mainstream interests to create, share, or gain access to content of their particular interest, such as polka music. In the last twenty years the situation has gone from famine to a feast of ways to experience polka music and dancing in the media. However, the nature of digital media has had a marked influence and substantially changed the type of polka communities that may communicate through them.

34 In the first place, there now is a "digital divide," separating people who do not possess computers or have little facility using them, mostly the elderly, from users of up-to-date technology. As a result, the Oom Pah polka genres, which have the highest proportion of elderly fans and the fewest youthful converts, have the smallest presence in digital media which require the use of a computer: internet radio and YouTube. But, because you can access it with a television, a long-familiar device, Oom Pah has been well represented in polka TV programming on RFD-TV.

35 Craig Ebel, a Minnesota polka musician and a polka DJ on over twenty small radio stations as well as an IJ on Polka Jammer, asserts that the bulk of his audience want to be able to turn on the familiar radio receiver to hear his "It's Polka Time" show. For the most part, his elderly listeners who now tune in via internet radio were those who were forced to make the conversion to listening with a computer. They are among the many American pensioners who moved south to states like Florida or Arizona, away from the chilly Upper Midwest where polka has retained at least a toehold on commercial radio stations. Webcasts have a world-wide range unlike the geographic limitations of terrestrial radio.[5]

36 Polka DJs typically relied upon local businesses for sponsors, especially ethnic-oriented concerns like specialty groceries, fraternal insurance plans, or travel agencies. Because of the elderly listener demographic, local retirement homes and undertakers also are typical advertisers. On 24/7 Polka Heaven or Polka Jammer, the shows that still are created by DJs initially for terrestrial radio feature this type of advertiser. Increasingly however, businesses that can operate on a national basis are featured on webcast programs, such as a Colorado bakery of Slovenian pastries that takes orders online and ships nationally, or a Detroit-area gift-shop nationally marketing imported Polish handicrafts.

37 The national, indeed international range of the webcasts might suggest that regional differences in the particular American polka styles will be eroded by the fact that a growing number of polka enthusiasts listen to the same mix of music selected by the internet IJs. Despite the persistence of a few American regional polka styles like those of Texas Czech bands and the Mountain West's "Dutch Hop" bands, there is, nonetheless, little remaining of the regional styles of polka's most widely distributed ethnic sub-genres. A very substantial homogenization of this music has already taken place. There has been national distribution of the records of the most influential polka artists for decades. The Cleveland-originated style personified by Frankie Yankovic is played by Slovenian-style polka bands from coast to coast. By the 1980s the Chicago Polish styles diffused by Li'l Wally and Eddie Blazonczyk had overwhelmed the Eastern-style Polish bands' music.

38 Paradoxically, however, besides homogenizing, the webcasts may also be contributing to a growing consciousness of American polka's history and diversity. The sheer volume of program time that now is available with a number of around-the-clock webcasters provides opportunities for specialized shows. Polka Jammer has a program that focuses on Polish-style recordings from the 1970s and another devoted to the 1980s. A third program explores the "Golden Age of Polkas" from the 1940s to the 1970s. On 24/7 Polka Heaven Greg Drust from Milwaukee presents carefully-crafted programs based on his deep knowledge of polka history in all its stylistic manifestations and the shows by Pittsburgh's Al Meixner display his remarkable awareness of a broad range of American and international polka idioms.

39 Despite the relatively low production values of the programs, cable and satellite TV continues to be a stable medium capable of reaching millions of polka enthusiasts. But it is programming that plays well only to people already versed in the polka traditions. There is no explanation of the music and dance. It is presented in practically unedited live performance. Some explanation of what we are viewing might help convert new enthusiasts. Profiles of the musicians' careers and interviews with important performers could significantly enhance the TV programs.

40 Online video continues to be the weakest component of American polka's utilization of internet resources. There is considerable skill and expense required to create professionally-produced videos and at this point, it is unclear what would be the financial return on such an investment. With relatively few viewers, polka videos do not attract advertisers. Moreover, watching videos on YouTube requires a lot of engagement from the viewer. One needs to search out the video and, most of the time, click a mouse to select another video after each two- or three-minute clip. Using YouTube is very unlike listening to terrestrial radio or watching broadcast TV. Thus it is likely that the home-movie type of video which offers peeks into performances at dances and polka festivals will remain for the foreseeable future the only type of polka offering on YouTube or other video sharing sites.

41 Polka proved to be agile more than a half century ago when all the major record labels dropped it. Small specialized and regional labels like Polkaland, Polka City, Dana, and Pleasant Peasant stepped into the breach providing a medium for the continued distribution of polka music. Again at the onset of the twenty-first century, polka has made another successful transition, this time to new digital media. Nonetheless, the polka audience is aging inexorably. But the world-wide reach of the new media casts a wider net and likely will ensure that a dedicated, if shrinking polka scene continues to exist for a long time to come.

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5. Craig Ebel, personal communication, March 2, 2014.

ABSTRACTS

From its very inception as a nineteenth century popular culture fad, the media presence of polka music has been crucial to its diffusion. In the 1940s and 1950s, polka enjoyed a high profile in American mass media. By the 1990s this presence was reduced to next to nothing. The advent of digital media has generated new platforms for the creation and sharing of polka music: internet radio, cable and satellite TV, and on-line videos. These new media have changed the nature of the interaction of communities of polka enthusiasts.

Dès l'apparition de la polka, mode de la culture musicale populaire née au XIX^{e} siècle, sa présence dans les médias a joué un rôle crucial dans sa diffusion. Alors que dans les années 1940 et 1950, la polka jouissait encore d'une large couverture médiatique, celle-ci avait pratiquement disparu dans les années 1990. L'émergence des médias numériques a fourni des nouvelles plateformes permettant la création et le partage de la polka, telles les webradios, la télévision par câble et par satellite et les vidéos partagées en ligne. Ces nouveaux médias de diffusion ont modifié la nature des interactions au sein des communautés de passionnés de polka.

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Subjects: La boîte à musique
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